

The Combined DNA Index System Newsletter

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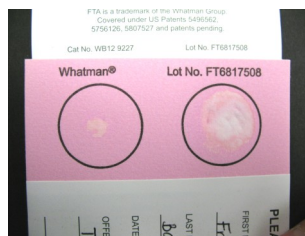
Help the CODIS Lab Save Money

In these challenging economic times, everyone is looking for new ways to save money and reduce waste, the CODIS Laboratory included. There are a number of ways that you and your agency can help us be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Each convicted offender DNA sample costs about \$16 to process, not including personnel costs. If a sample is weak and doesn't produce a full profile during the first round of testing, CODIS scientists must perform extra work, which is both time-consuming and expensive. In fact, the total cost jumps to approximately \$40 per weak sample. Your diligence in collecting quality, strong samples will greatly reduce the amount of re-work required.

Of the total cost to process a DNA sample, \$3.30 goes toward providing the collection kit to your agency.

When the CODIS laboratory receives duplicate samples, the collection cards are filed away and not processed further because the offender's DNA profile is already in the database.



Weak (left) & strong (right)
samples

Currently, the laboratory receives about 1500 samples each month and the duplicate rate is nearly 20%. Over the course of a year, that means nearly \$12,000 is spent on samples that did not need to be collected. One way that you can help us reduce waste in this area is to check the offender's criminal history to see whether he or she has already submitted a sample.

On the rapsheet, the "DNA Taken" field will indicate either "Y" or "N". Access to criminal histories can be obtained through the WATCH search engine (see below for more information). Alternatively, you may always call the laboratory; we are more than happy to provide you with the appropriate information.

Taking quality thumbprints can also make a big difference. Every sample that must be re-collected because of poor prints is another \$3.30 that could have been saved. We also understand that bad prints happen occasionally, no matter how conscientious you are. Rather than throwing out the entire card and starting over, use re-print tabs, as described on page 2 of this newsletter.

By following these guidelines, you'll not only help save money—you'll be saving yourself time as well!

WATCH Address Has Changed

In order to improve security and performance, the WATCH address has changed to: <http://watchcj.wsp.wa.gov/>

Access to WATCH is free for criminal justice agencies. If you would like to set up an account, click on the "Forms" link on the left side of the main WATCH homepage to download an application.

Fingerprinting Guidelines



Marianne labeling DNA samples

Here are some helpful hints from the Fingerprint Technicians at WSP's Criminal Records Division:

1. The best type of inkpads to use is a Porelon® pad. This special type of pad prevents too much ink from binding to the offender's thumb, which is a common problem seen with prints submitted to the CODIS Laboratory. Each pad will last for thousands of prints.
2. Avoid using too much pressure by grabbing the offender's thumb at the knuckle and lightly pressing it to the card. This will allow for proper ridge detail and decrease smudging.
3. If an offender has sweaty hands, wiping with an alcohol swab is helpful.
4. If a print comes out poorly, use an adhesive backed re-tab to cover it on the submission card, rather than using a new card. If an offender is uncooperative, try putting several re-tabs on the edge of a desk and affix the best one to the submission card. Please do not stack more than one re-tab on top of the other.

DNA Fun Fact:

Identical twins share the same DNA profile, but their fingerprints are different.



Q & A

Why are thumbprints required?

The CODIS Laboratory uses thumbprints to verify an offender's identity. This is a very important step when confirming CODIS hits and adds an extra layer of quality control to our results.

What happens to the convicted offender DNA samples submitted to the lab?

Each sample and submission card is evaluated to ensure that it meets our acceptance policies. Samples are then labeled with a unique laboratory case number and stored until DNA typing is conducted. All DNA typing results are reviewed by another CODIS scientist before being entered into the state CODIS database. New profiles are uploaded to the national CODIS database every week. The convicted offender profiles at the state and national levels of CODIS are searched regularly against DNA from crime scenes. The goal of these searches is to match unsolved casework forensic samples to the DNA profiles of convicted offenders (a "CODIS hit"). The CODIS Lab re-types the sample to confirm the hit and the name of the convicted offender is released to the investigating detective. This provides important information to help solve cases ranging from homicides to burglaries.

Q & A (continued)

What ID number should I use if an offender has no SID?

In this case, a DOC number is acceptable. If a DOC number does not exist, use an FBI number, a local ID, or a Social Security number, in that order of preference.

How many hits has Washington State had?

Since June 2001, there have been 1373 hits. There have been 252 hits in 2010 so far.

Can I abbreviate my agency's name on the submission card?

Yes, but it must be specific. For example, "SCSO" might refer to Snohomish, Spokane, Skamania, Skagit, or Stevens County Sheriff's Office; "Sno Co SO" would be appropriate. For DOC field offices, please include the location; "DOC" is not enough information for samples to be entered into our internal database.



Where can I buy the fingerprinting supplies recommended in this newsletter?

Porelon® inkpads and re-tabs can be purchased for very reasonable prices at the following vendors:

Sirchie
1(800)356-7311
www.sirchie.com

Lightning Powder Co.
1(800)852-0300
www.redwop.com

Reminder:

Please have
new staff
watch the
DNA
collection
training
DVD!

Training Opportunities Available

The CODIS Laboratory is still offering limited collector training to our agencies. The training takes approximately one hour and covers: basics about CODIS, the CODIS Laboratory, and the ins and outs of convicted offender DNA sample collection. This is great way to fulfill continuing education requirements!

If your agency is interested in having CODIS staff come to

your facility for collector training, please contact us at:

confel@wsp.wa.gov

If members of your agency are in the Seattle area and would like to see the CODIS Laboratory, a tour may be possible. Although we can't accommodate many groups on a regular basis, we do enjoy sharing a look inside our laboratory. Please contact us for more information.

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